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CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Jane Eyre



Jane Eyre

Charlotte Brontë



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about the author

Charlotte Brontë was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1816. Her father was a minister, and her mother was a frail woman who died when Charlotte was five.

Charlotte and three of her sisters were sent to a school nearby where conditions were so bad that two of them grew sick and died. Many believe that Charlotte used this school as a model for Lowood in *Jane Eyre*.

When her education was complete, Charlotte and her sister Emily planned to open a school for girls. But no one applied to the school, and the sisters were forced to give it up. Then a new idea occurred to them. Charlotte had been writing stories since she was a child; finally she decided to publish one. In 1847, under the pen name of Currer Bell, Charlotte's novel *Jane Eyre* was printed. It was an instant success.

Her financial worries were over, but Charlotte had other sufferings to endure. Her brother and her two sisters died within a short time, leaving her alone. Yet she managed to write two more novels, *Shirley* and *Villette*. Then in 1854 she married Arthur Bell Nicholls, her father's assistant minister.

Charlotte's happiness as an author and a wife, however, was cut short. After only a year of marriage, she died in 1855 at the age of thirty-nine.

Charlotte
Brontë

Jane Eyre



Bessie



Mr. Rochester



Jane Eyre



Mrs. Fairfax



St. John Rivers

This is my story. As a child I was left an orphan in the care of my mother's brother. All was well until he died. He left a widow and three children who had room in their house, but not in their hearts, for me.



It was a rainy winter day at Gateshead Hall. My cousins Eliza, John, and Georgiana gathered around their mother in the drawing room.



POCKET CLASSICS



Jane Eyre



POCKET CLASSICS

Then, picking up the book, John threw it at me.

And that is for reading my books!



For once, I answered back. I had been reading a history of Rome.

John rushed at me.

What? Did you hear what she said, Eliza and Georgiana? Wait till I get over there!

Wicked boy! You are like the Roman emperors!



He grasped me by the hair. Angrily I fought back.



Mrs. Reed arrived, followed by her maid Abbot, and Bessie the nurse. We were quickly separated.

What a fury, to fly at Master John!

Did anybody ever see such a thing?



Take her away to the red room, and lock her in!



I was carried upstairs, struggling all the way.

She never did so before.



It was always in her! She's an under-handed little thing!

POCKET CLASSICS



In the red room, nine years before, Mr. Reed had died and had lain in state. It was an elegant, cold room, and was seldom used.

You must know, Miss, you owe a great deal to Mrs. Reed. If she turned you out, you would go to the poor-house!

Just because she allows you to be brought up with the Misses and Master John, it doesn't make you their equal. They will have a lot of money, and you will have none!

It is your place to be humble!

It's for your own good!

Say your prayers! If you aren't sorry, something bad might come down the chimney and take you away!



*They left, locking the door.
My head ached and bled. I
sat trying to think.*

Eliza and
Georgiana are
selfish and
spoiled; John
is cruel to me
and to every-
one! But they
are loved and
praised and
never punished!



*I try to be good, but
I am always punished.
It's just not right!*



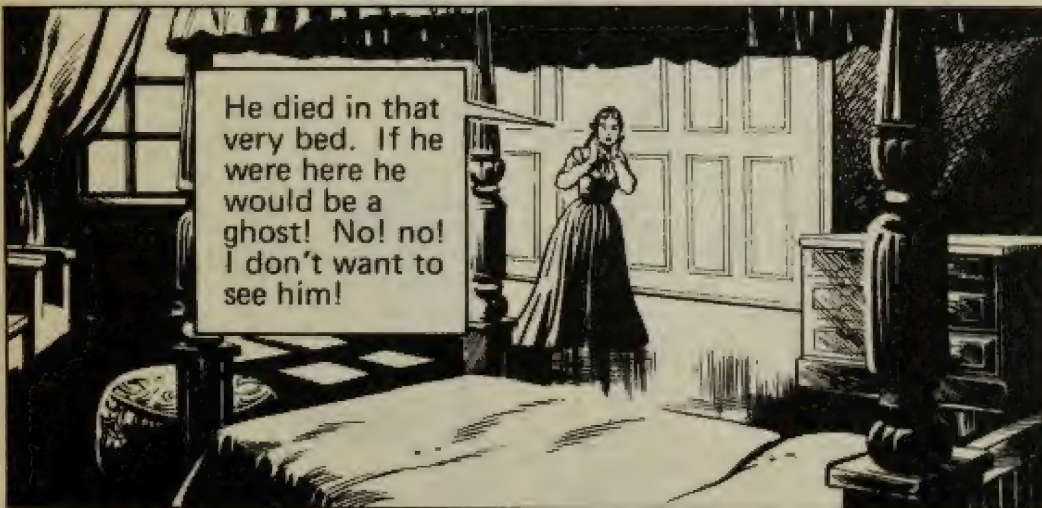
*Mr. Reed had
been my uncle,
my mother's
brother. When
my parents
died soon after
my birth, he
took me into
his own home.
And at his
death, he had
made Mrs.
Reed promise
to bring me up
as one of her
own children.*

*I walked to the
window.*

*If Mr. Reed were
here, he would treat
me kindly! But he
is out there in a
grave in the
churchyard.*



*He died in that
very bed. If he
were here he
would be a
ghost! No! no!
I don't want to
see him!*



POCKET CLASSICS



A beam of light slanted into the room, glided to the ceiling, and came to rest over my head. I was terrified.

Help!
Help!

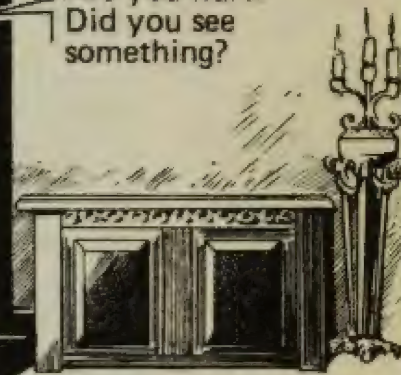
Then I heard footsteps and the key turned.

What dreadful noise!

Take me out!
Let me go to my room!



Are you hurt?
Did you see something?



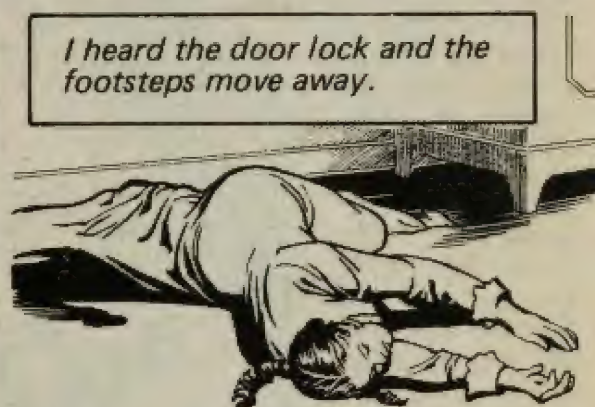
Oh, I saw a light, and I thought a ghost would come!



Then Mrs. Reed appeared.

What is all this?





POCKET CLASSICS

Well, who am I?

• Mr. Lloyd, sir—the apothecary.



She'll do very well now, See that she is not upset tonight. I will call again tomorrow.



Talking to me the next day, Mr. Lloyd learned that I was very unhappy and would like to go to school. He told this to Mrs. Reed. Several weeks later I was brought to her in the drawing room.

This is the little girl I told you about, Mr. Brocklehurst.

There is no sight so sad as that of a naughty child!



I wish her to be brought up very simply. She must be made useful, be kept humble.

I take care to do this at Lowood! Plain fare, simple dress, hardy and active habits . . .

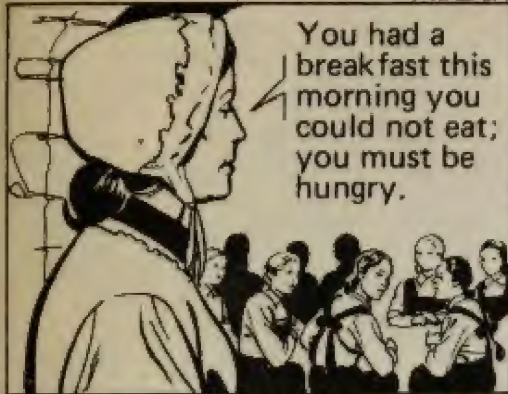




POCKET CLASSICS



At noon Miss Temple, the principal, rose and spoke to us.



I have ordered that a lunch of bread and cheese be served to all.



After this welcome lunch, we went to the garden for some exercise. Here I made a friend, Helen Burns.

Will you tell me something about the school?

Anything I can.



"Lowood School. Rebuilt by Naomi Brocklehurst of Brocklehurst Hall." What does that mean?

She was Mr. Brocklehurst's mother. He runs everything here.



POCKET CLASSICS

Then the school does not belong to Miss Temple?

Oh, no! She must answer to Mr. Brocklehurst for everything.



Why do all the girls look so much alike?

We make our own clothes—all from the same materials and the same patterns.



One afternoon Mr. Brocklehurst visited the school.

I find in settling the accounts that a lunch of bread and cheese has been served to the girls. How is this?

I ordered it, sir. Breakfast was so badly prepared that they could not eat it.



Madam, my plan is to make these girls hardy, patient, and humble! A little thing like burnt porridge should be allowed every now and then!



Suddenly one of the older girls caught his eye.

What is this?
Red hair, ma'am,
curled—curled
all over!

That is Julia
Severn. Her
hair curls
naturally.



I wish the hair to be arranged
plainly! That girl's hair must be
cut short enough never to curl
again!



Mr. Brocklehurst was a dreadful man. I was very afraid of him. But I worked hard, learned my lessons, and was promoted to a higher class. I began to learn French and drawing. I made many friends. At last I began to be happy.

Spring came. It was warm, and the world blossomed.

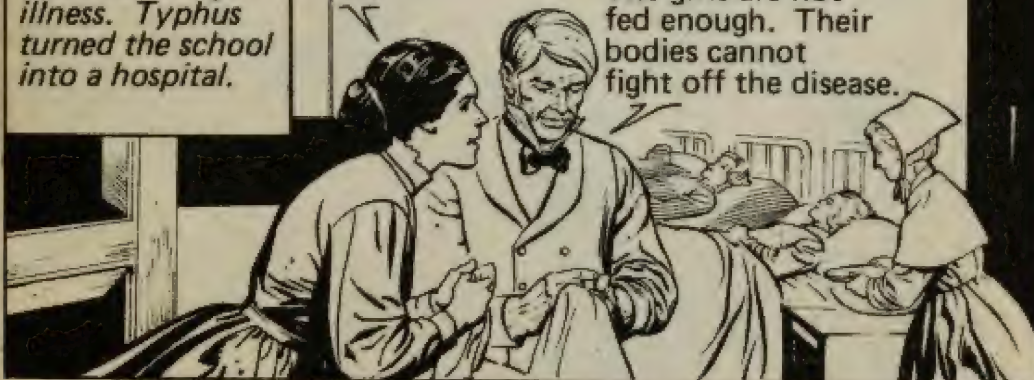


Oh, Helen it's
lovely! It's warm!

But the warm weather brought illness. Typhus turned the school into a hospital.

More than half
the pupils are
ill!

The building is in
an unhealthy place.
The girls are not
fed enough. Their
bodies cannot
fight off the disease.



POCKET CLASSICS

Before the sickness had run its course, there were many deaths, among them Helen Burns. But some good came out of all our suffering.

All of us were shocked to learn about life at Lowood.

Many people in the county have raised the money for a new school. It will be built in a much better place.



Everything is to be improved. Mr. Brocklehurst will no longer have so much power!

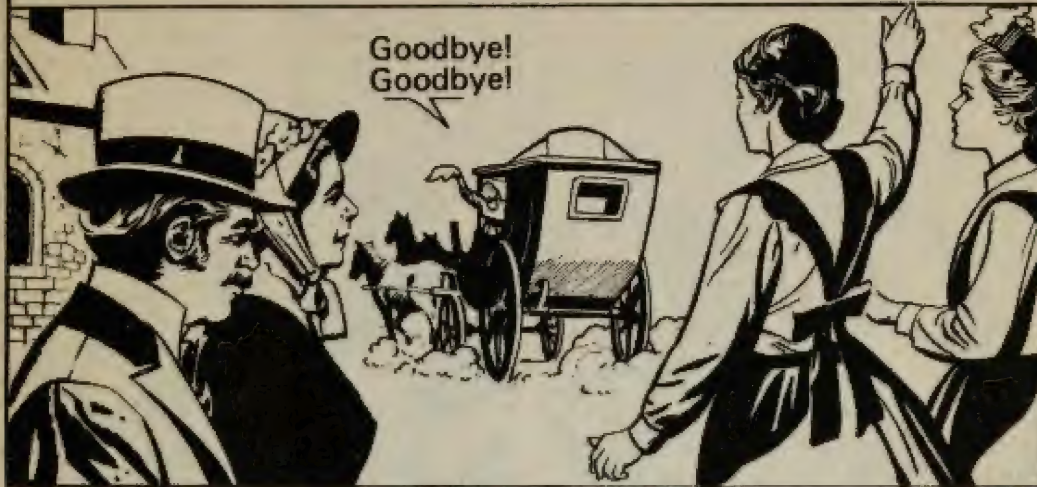


I am so thankful! Lowood can become a truly noble school!



And so it proved to be. I remained there for six years as a pupil, receiving a fine education. I stayed on for two more years as a teacher. And Miss Temple's friendship was always my greatest joy.

Then Miss Temple got married. I watched her, after the ceremony, step into the coach that would carry her away to a distant home.



I went to my room.

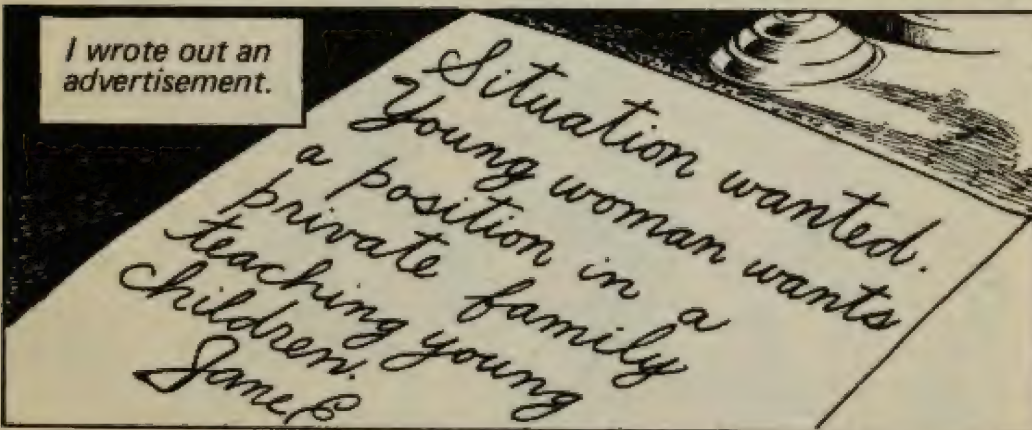


For eight years my school duties, school rules, and school habits have been my world.

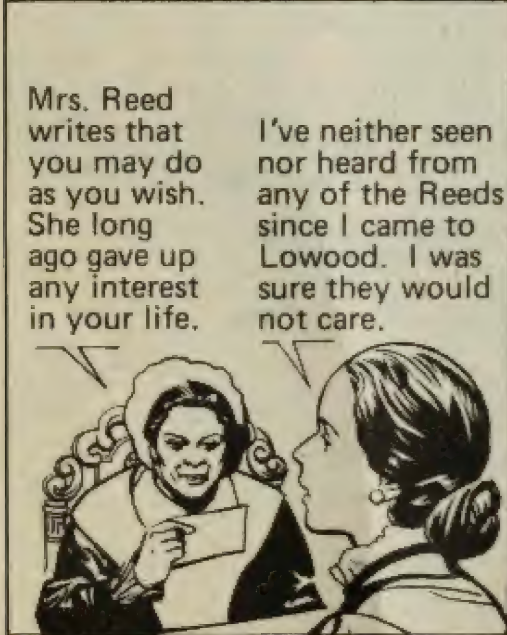
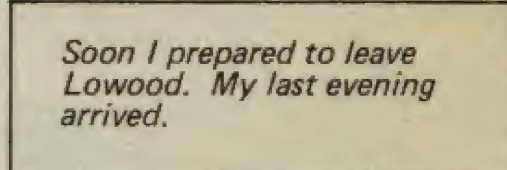
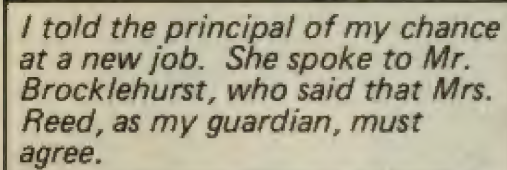
There is another world out there! I want a new place, in a new house, with new faces!



I wrote out an advertisement.



POCKET CLASSICS



I went to the teachers' sitting-room. A woman took my hand.



In another second I was kissing her.



Bessie told me her own news, and that of the Reeds.

Did Mrs. Reed send you, Bessie?

Oh, no! I've often wanted to see you. Then when I heard you were moving far away, I thought I would come and say goodbye.



I am afraid you do not like what I have become, Bessie!

No, Miss Jane. You are quite a lady, and ever so smart! You'll do well, even without your rich relatives!



POCKET CLASSICS

Have you ever heard anything from your father's family, the Eyres?

Never in my life.



Missus always said they were poor and low-class. But seven years ago, a Mr. Eyre came to Gateshead and wanted to see you. He was as much of a gentleman as any of the Reeds could ever be!



He was sorry to hear that you were away at school. He was leaving in a day or two for another country.

What country?



An island far away . . . where they make wine . . . Madeira, that's it!

Well, I have never heard from him.



We talked of old times for an hour or more. Then Bessie left for home, and I went to bed. The next morning I mounted the coach which would take me to new duties and a new life.



After a sixteen-hour drive I reached my goal, a country house outside of Millcote.



So this is
Thornfield
Hall!

*The maid showed me to a
cozy sitting-room.*

Come in, my
dear! You must
be cold.

Mrs. Fairfax,
I suppose?



Yes. Do sit down! I will
order you a hot drink and
something to eat!



*I had expected to see someone
very formal, but she treated
me like a visitor. Mrs. Fairfax
paid more attention to my
comfort than I had ever before
received!*

POCKET CLASSICS

After my late supper she led me upstairs through great, dark hallways to my bedroom.

This is the room next to mine. It is only a small apartment, but I thought you would prefer it to one of the front rooms, grand as they are!



The next morning I arose early. I found my way downstairs and stepped out through an open door to look at my new home.

A gentleman's manor house! It is not a nobleman's home, but it is quite lovely anyway!



It was here that Mrs. Fairfax found me.

You are an early riser! How do you like Thornfield?

Very Much!



Yes, a pretty place. But I fear it will run down, unless Mr. Rochester should decide to live here the year round.

Mr. Rochester? Who is he?





The owner of
Thornfield!
Did you not
know?

I thought
Thornfield
belonged
to you!



Bless you, child!
I am only the
housekeeper . . .
although a distant
relative of his.

And the
little girl,
my pupil?



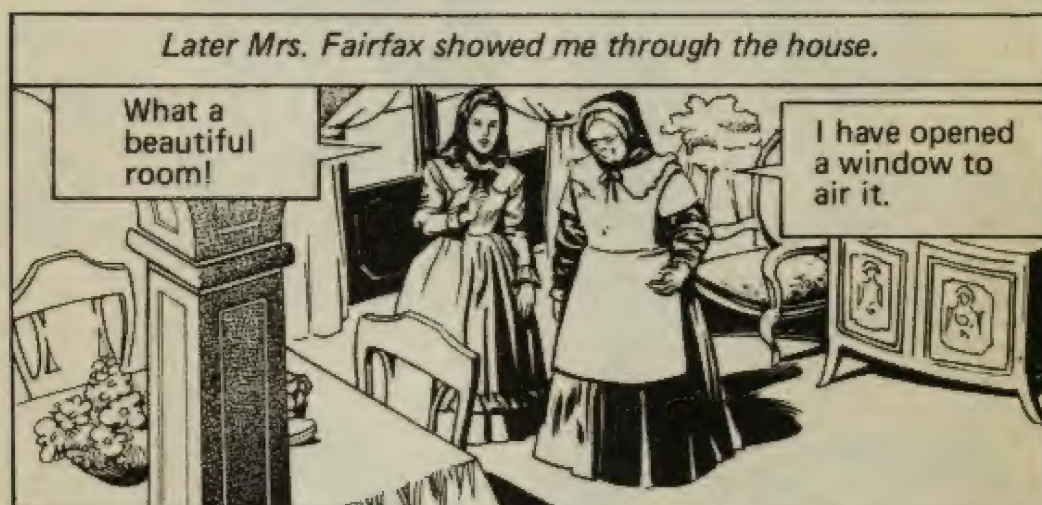
She is Adele Varens, a French
child, Mr. Rochester's ward.
Here she comes now, with her
nurse.



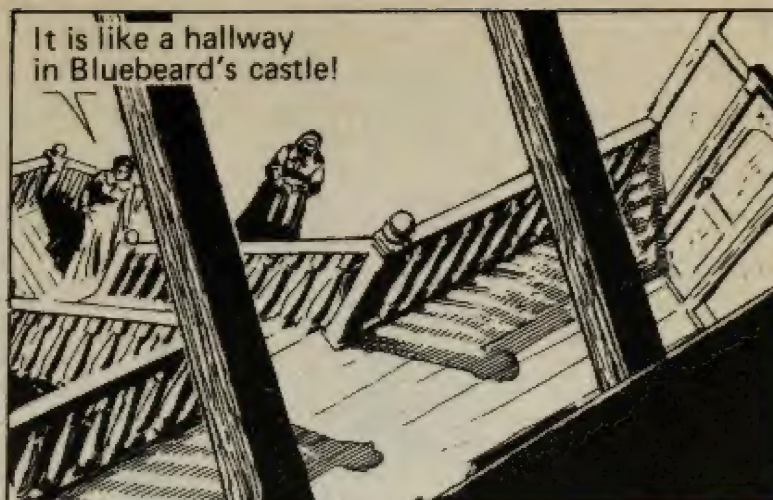
Come, Adele,
speak to the
lady who is to
teach you.

C'est ma
gouvernante!

POCKET CLASSICS



I followed her through many grand chambers, then through the attics and onto the roof for a fine view. Returning, I awaited her in an attic hall.



Then I heard a sound . . . a loud, strange laugh.

Ha-ha-
HA-HA!



Mrs. Fairfax! Did you hear it? Does Thornfield Hall have a ghost?

No ghosts at Thornfield, my dear. It is likely one of the servants . . . perhaps Grace Poole.



Too much noise, Grace. Remember your orders.

Yes ma'am.



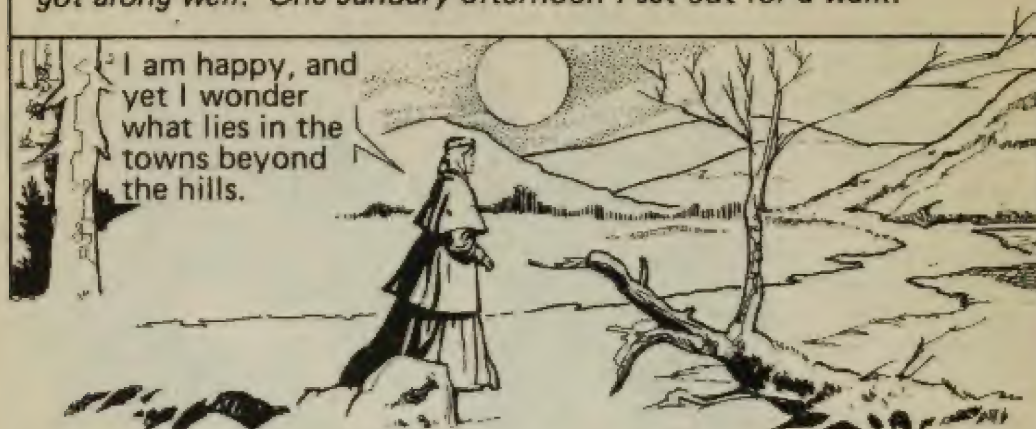
She is a servant who sews and helps with the housemaid's work.

She is not very ghost-like!



POCKET CLASSICS

October, November, December passed. Mrs. Fairfax, Adele, and I got along well. One January afternoon I set out for a walk.



As I started to walk again, a horseman appeared.



Suddenly, with a clatter, the horse slipped on some ice.



The rider untangled himself, and the horse got up.



Are you hurt, sir?

Down, Pilot!

If you are hurt and want help, I can fetch someone from Thornfield Hall.



Thank you, I shall manage. No broken bones, only a sprain.

I cannot leave you alone until I see you are able to ride.

Very well, then ... help me to my horse.

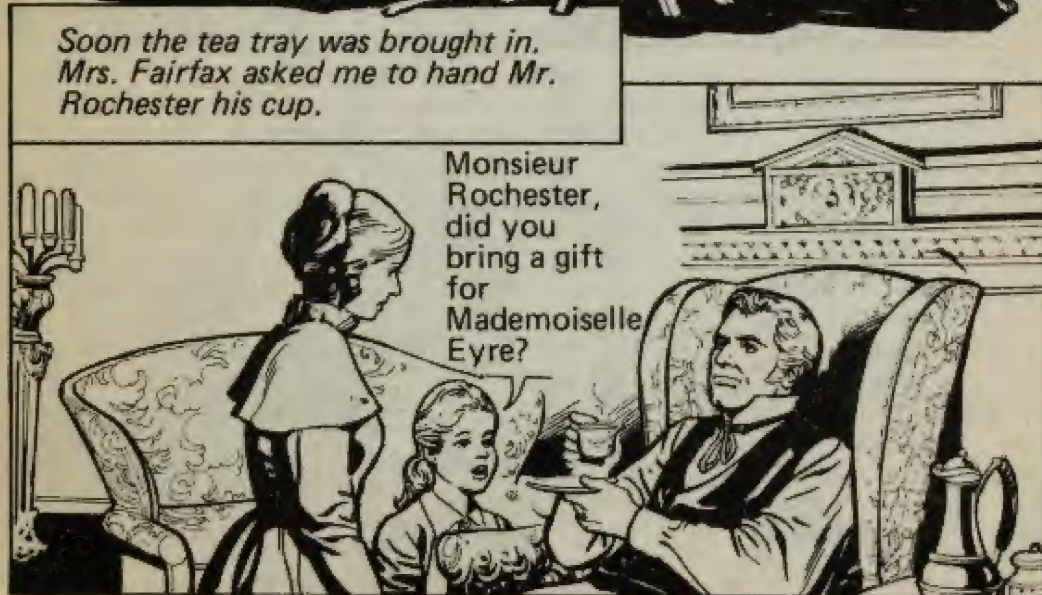


You should be at home yourself. Go quickly!



POCKET CLASSICS





POCKET CLASSICS

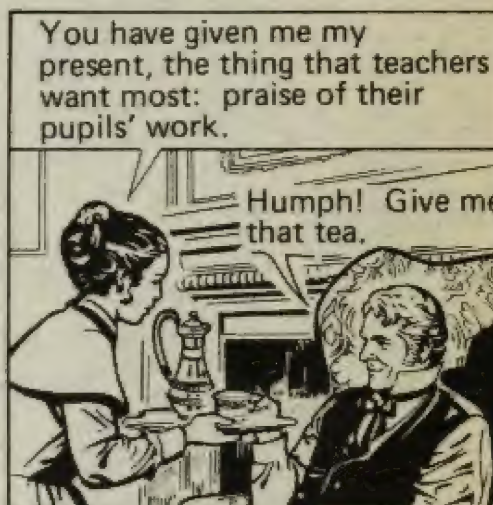


Did you expect a present, Miss Eyre?

No, sir. I am a stranger, and have done nothing to earn one.



Oh, don't be over-modest! You have taken great pains with Adele. She has learned much since you came!



You have given me my present, the thing that teachers want most: praise of their pupils' work.

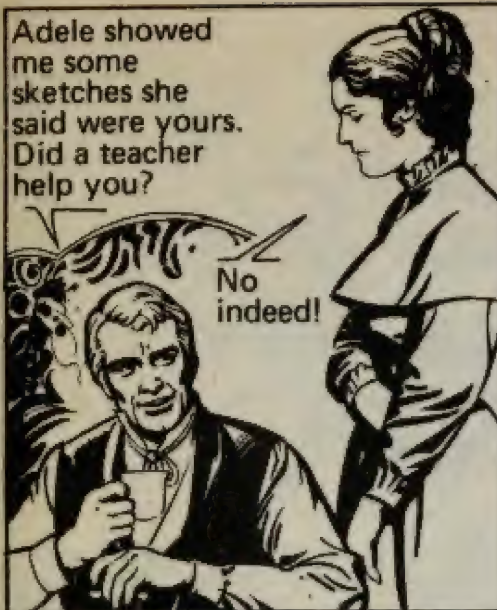
Humph! Give me that tea.

After tea, I sat by the fire, and Mr. Rochester asked me about many things: my family, my years at Lowood, the things I could do.

Learning that I played a little, he sent me to the piano.



Enough! You play like any English school-girl. You are better than some, but you do not play really well.



Mr. Rochester studied each sketch and painting carefully. He set aside three.



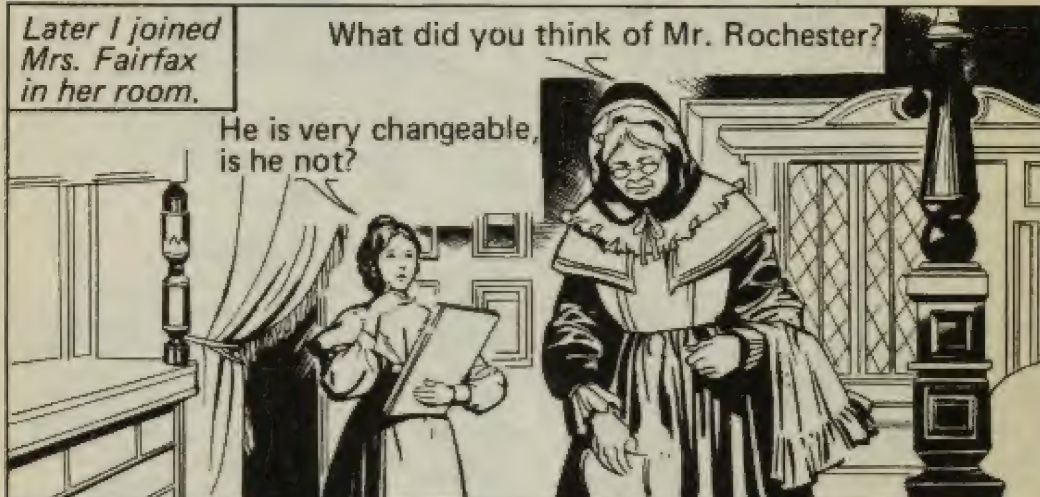
But I was upset by the contrast between my ideas and my work.



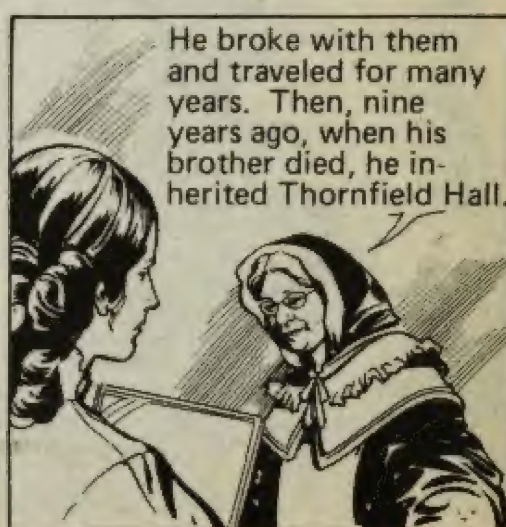
POCKET CLASSICS



Later I joined Mrs. Fairfax in her room.

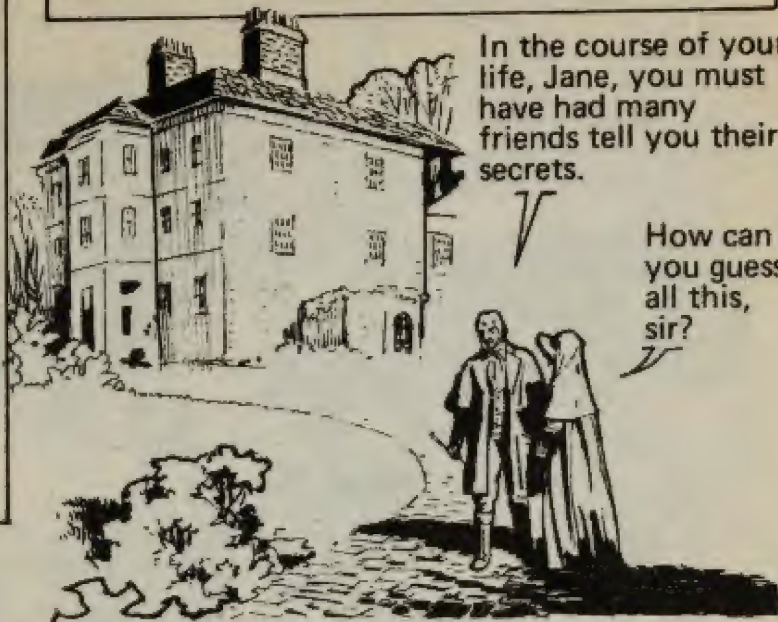


Yes, but he had had troubles. As he grew up, his father and elder brother were unfair to him.



In the days that passed, I had other talks with Mr. Rochester. He liked to talk about the world and its beauties to people who had seen only a small part of it.

He also told me something of his past life.



In the course of your life, Jane, you must have had many friends tell you their secrets.

How can you guess all this, sir?

I know it. You listen with great understanding. I talk to you as freely as if I were writing in my diary.



I am fighting within myself. Life dares me to like Thornfield—dares me to stay here!



POCKET CLASSICS

That night I could not sleep. I kept thinking of his look when he spoke of staying at Thornfield.

Will he leave again soon? Mrs. Fairfax said he seldom stays longer than two weeks. He has been here eight weeks already . . .



If he goes . . . if he is absent . . . how sad the fine days of spring, summer, and fall will seem!



I put out my candle and lay down. I heard the clock strike two. Then there was a devilish laugh.

Ha-ha-
HA-HA
HA!

Was that Grace Poole? Is she insane?



I am frightened!
I will dress and go
to Mrs. Fairfax!



When I opened my door I saw no one . . . only a candle burning on the hall floor.



Smoke! And I smell something burning!

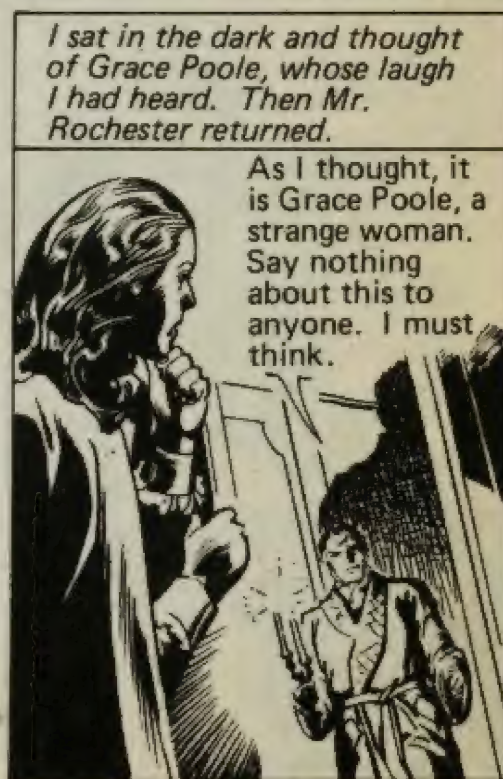
Forgetting everything else, I hurried to Mr. Rochester's room.



The smoke had made him groggy. I rushed for his basin and pitcher and emptied them onto the bed.



POCKET CLASSICS





POCKET CLASSICS

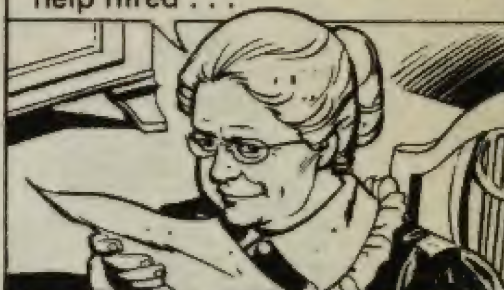
Two weeks passed. Then a letter came for Mrs. Fairfax.

Well—sometimes we are too quiet, but we'll be busy enough now!

Mr. Rochester is returning?



In three days—and bringing with him most of the fine people from the Eshton party. All the best bedrooms are to be prepared . . . everything cleaned . . . extra kitchen help hired . . .



On the stated afternoon, the party arrived.



Soon the house was full of happy voices. In the hallways the maids and valets of the visitors rushed about. Mrs. Fairfax brought me a message.

Mr. Rochester asks that you bring Adele to the drawing room after dinner each evening.





POCKET CLASSICS

That night I was awakened by a terrible cry.



Rochester!
For God's sake, come!

It is from the third floor!



In a moment the hallway was full of excited people.



It's all right!
Calm down!

A servant has had a nightmare, that is all! Now, back into your rooms!



But the sounds had been in the room above mine—both the cries and the noise of blows and fighting. Whatever it was, it was more than a servant's nightmare. I dressed and waited in my room, ready for I knew not what. I was not too surprised when Mr. Rochester came for me.

In a third floor room an inner door, usually covered by a curtain, stood open.

It sounds like an animal growling in there!

Never mind! I will lock the door.



He led me around a large bed!

Mr. Mason!

He will be all right. But you must stay with him while I ride for the doctor.



It seemed forever that I sat beside Mason, wiping away the blood and holding smelling salts to his nose when he felt faint. But at last dawn came, and Mr. Rochester and the doctor arrived.

He will be all right—it is mostly loss of blood. But there have been teeth here, as well as a knife!

She bit me—like a tiger!



I warned you to be on your guard!

Mr. Rochester wanted Mason to be away before everyone woke up. We helped him down to a waiting carriage after the doctor had finished.

Goodbye, Rochester. Let her be treated as tenderly as may be . . .

I do my best. I have done it, and will do it.



POCKET CLASSICS

Only a short time later I received a message from Bessie at Gateshead. My cousin John Reed, having gambled away most of the family's fortune, had shot himself. The shock had given his mother a stroke, and she kept calling for Jane Eyre.

I went at once to find Mr. Rochester.

I suppose I must give you leave to go. But promise you will return in a week!

I promise to return, sir. But perhaps not in a week's time.



Indeed, when I arrived at Gateshead my aunt was very ill. It was more than two weeks before she could tell me what she wanted.

Go to my dressing-case. Open it, take out the letter you will see, and read it.



I obeyed her orders and read the following, dated three years back:

Madam:
I wish to adopt
my niece, Jane Eyre.
I want to bring her
here to Madeira to
live. I wish to leave
my fortune to her.
John Eyre

I could not bear to make you wealthy! I wrote him that Jane Eyre had died of typhus fever at Lowood. Now act as you please . . .

Love me or hate me as you will, Aunt. You have my full forgiveness.



Mrs. Reed died that night. I had hoped to leave after the funeral, but stayed on to give my cousins what help I could. A month had passed before I reached Thornfield again.

It was a beautiful summer evening as I left the coach and walked across the fields. My heart beat faster as I saw a familiar figure.



Jane! Is it you or a dream?

It is I, sir.

Jane, never leave me again! Will you marry me?

Are you serious? Do you truly love me?



I do; if only an oath will satisfy you, I swear it!

Then, sir, I will marry you.



The next few days passed in a happy dream as Mr. Rochester made his plans.

We shall be married in four weeks. The wedding will take place quietly in the village church below.

I feel so surprised I hardly know what to say!



Will Mademoiselle wear satin and jewels?

POCKET CLASSICS

I have sent to the bank for my family jewels. And we shall go this very day to buy Jane silks and satins!

No, no! You won't know me, sir. I will not be Jane Eyre in fancy clothes!



Suddenly I remembered the letter from my uncle. I would write to him at once.

I will tell my uncle that I am alive and going to be married. I would be happier if I could bring even a little money to Mr. Rochester!



The month passed. Then, two nights before my wedding, I dreamed that Thornfield Hall was in ruins.



I awoke, candlelight in my eyes, to see a strange woman staring at my wedding clothes. She took my veil, and threw it over her own head.



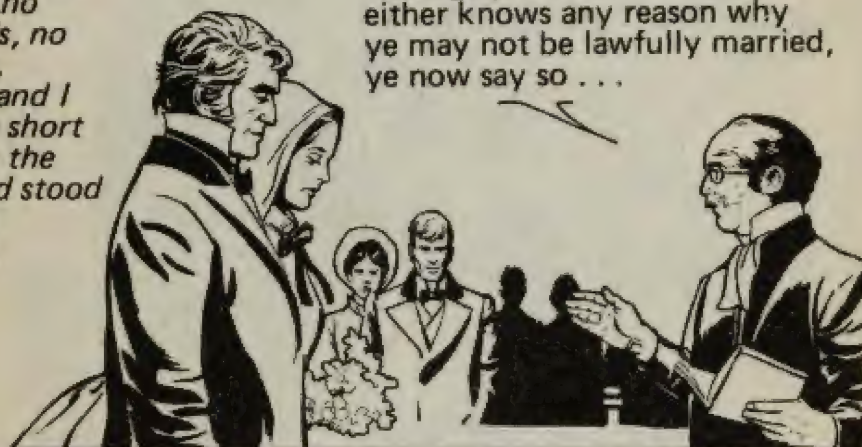
She took off the veil, tore it in two, and threw it on the floor.



Starting for the door, she stopped at my bedside and put her candle close to my face. For the second time in my life, I fainted from terror.



For our wedding there were no bridesmaids, no guests. Mr. Rochester and I walked the short distance to the church, and stood before the clergyman.



I charge you both . . . that if either knows any reason why ye may not be lawfully married, ye now say so . . .

A voice spoke nearby.

The marriage cannot go on. There is a good reason.



A man came forward.

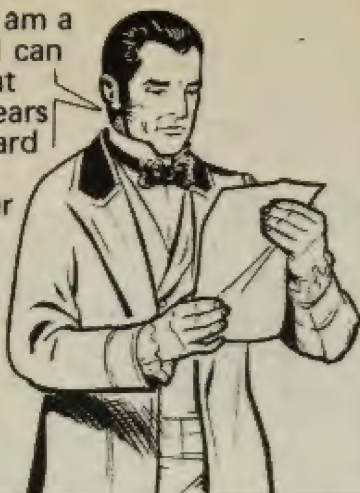
What is it?

Simply . . . that Mr. Rochester has a wife now living!



POCKET CLASSICS

My name is Briggs. I am a lawyer. I can prove that fifteen years ago Edward Fairfax Rochester married Bertha Mason in Spanish Town, Jamaica.



That may prove that I have been married. It does not prove that the woman is still living.



She was living three months ago.

Another man stepped forward from the shadows.

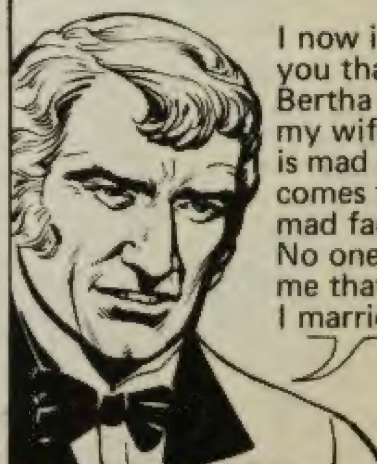
Mr. Mason!



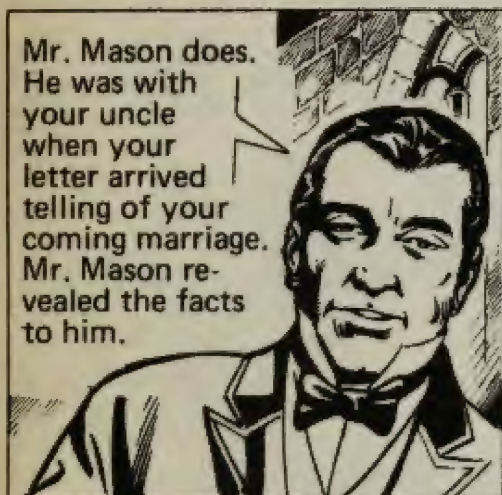
I saw her at Thornfield Hall last April. I am her brother.



Enough! We can go no further. There has been gossip about the crazy woman kept at Thornfield under lock and key. She is Grace Poole's patient.



I now inform you that she is Bertha Mason, my wife. She is mad and comes from a mad family. No one told me that before I married her!



We returned to Thornfield Hall. The coach, packed for our wedding trip, was unpacked, and the luggage was taken inside. I went to my room, changed from my wedding dress, and sat down to think.



There was only one answer. I must leave Thornfield Hall, for my dear Edward's sake as well as my own. I must slip away unseen, for if he begged me to stay, I would not be able to leave him.

POCKET CLASSICS

At dawn I packed a few clothes, took my purse, and crept silently out of the house.



Farewell, kind Mrs. Fairfax! Farewell, dear Adele! And God bless you, my dear master!

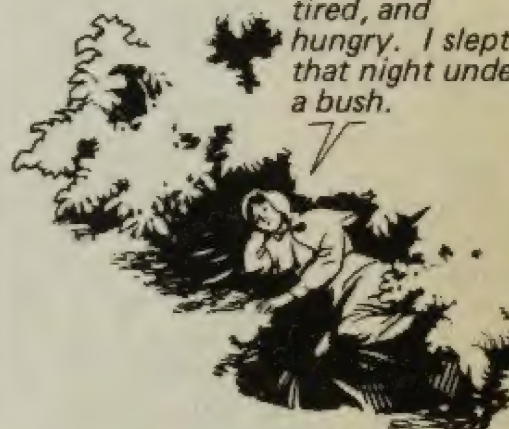


On the road I hailed a coach and rode for two days to Whitcross, as far as all the money in my purse would take me.



So Whitcross is only a crossroads! And I have left my things on the coach!

I was weak, tired, and hungry. I slept that night under a bush.



The next morning I ate some berries, then walked to a nearby village. I needed food and work. I entered a bake shop.



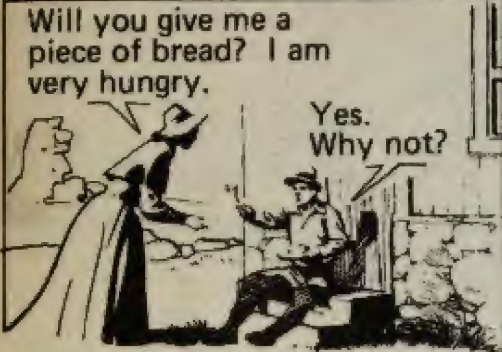
Do you know where I might find work?

No. The local factory uses only men. People who want servants have them already, and there are as many dressmakers as the town needs.

I wandered here and there asking at other places with always the same answer. At sundown, I saw a farmer eating his supper.

Will you give me a piece of bread? I am very hungry.

Yes.
Why not?



At dark, I was outside the village. It began to rain.

Am I to die of want and cold?



Suddenly, across an empty space, a light shone. Was this a sign? I tried to reach it, and found a long, low house.



How lucky I was! The people who lived there took me in.

Who is it?

I found her on the doorstep.



POCKET CLASSICS

The Rivers family: Diana, Mary, their brother St. John, and the old servant Hannah fed me, nursed me back to health, and became my friends. St. John promised to find me work.



I am the minister at Moreton. When I arrived, it had no school. I opened one for boys; I mean now to open one for girls. The teacher will have a two-room cottage and thirty pounds a year.

It is only a village school. The pupils will be poor girls . . . cottagers' children and farmers' daughters. Will you accept the job?



I accept it with all my heart!

I moved into my little cottage and started the school. St. John often visited me and talked of his plans.



Long ago I vowed to become a missionary. My father was against it, but since his death I am free to go. I shall soon leave for the East.



Come with me, Jane! I have watched you work here for ten months. God wanted you to be a missionary's wife!

I am not fit for it. God has not called me to live that way!

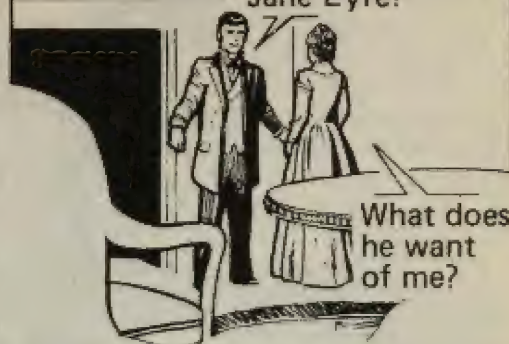


I have a woman's heart, and for you, St. John, I have only a sister's love. I cannot marry you.

Jane, you would not be sorry! I will not give up yet!

Another day he brought a different sort of news.

I have heard from Briggs, a London lawyer, who has news for you, Jane Eyre!



What does he want of me?

To tell you that your uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead. He has left you his property, 20,000 pounds. You are now rich!

!? Rich? Perhaps it is a mistake.



And why did Mr. Briggs write to you of this?

Because my mother's name was Eyre! She was your father's sister! Your Uncle John was also our Uncle John!



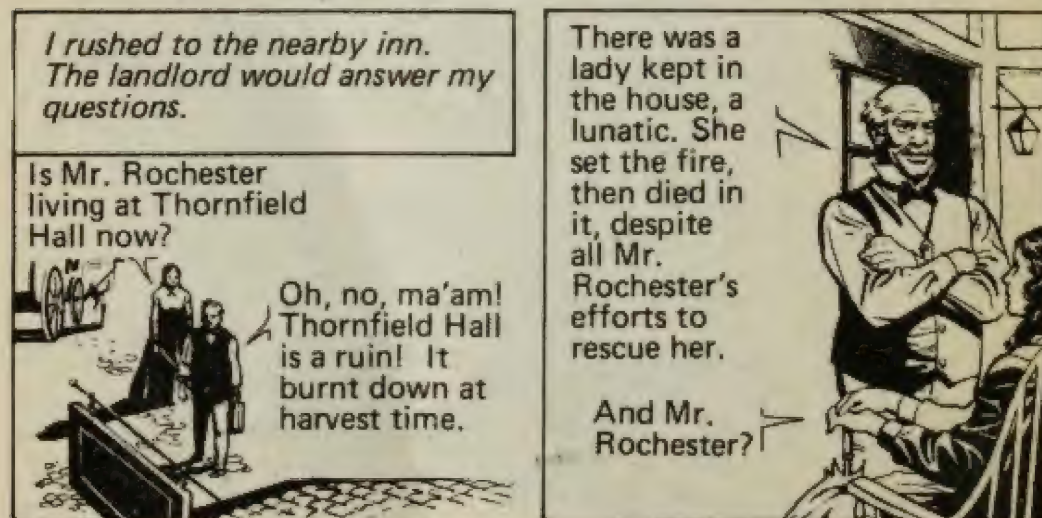
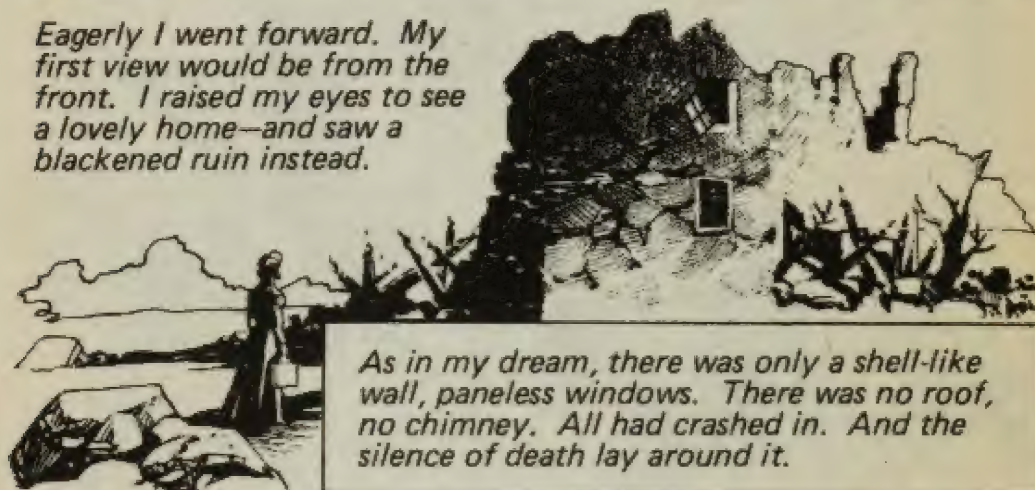
You, Diana, and Mary are my cousins? I have relatives at last? Oh, I am glad! I am glad!

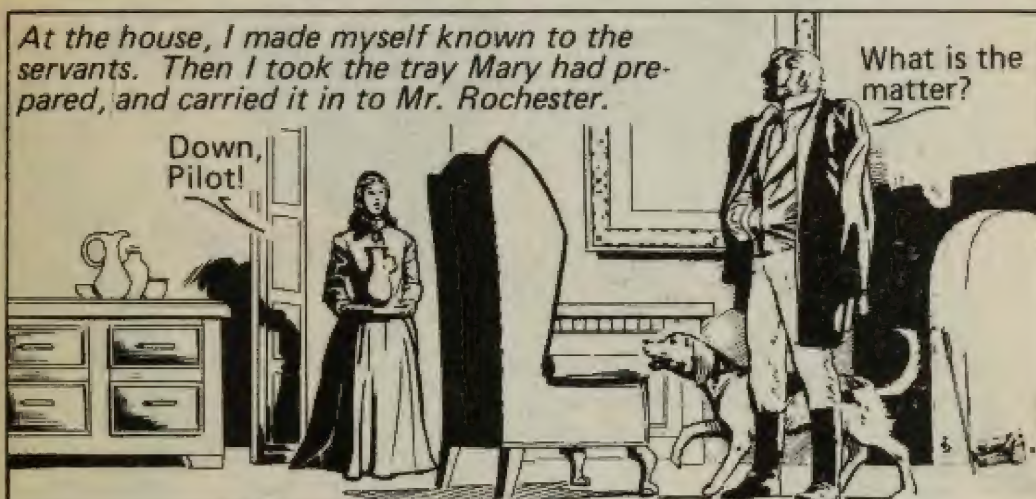
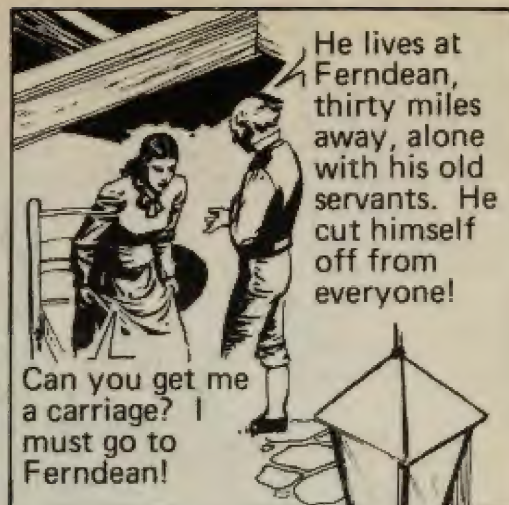
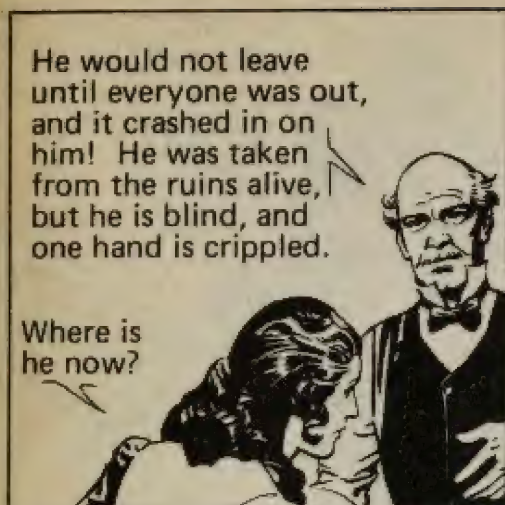
You seem to care more about that than about the fortune!



It was true. I was happy to have cousins whom I already loved. I arranged at once that the money should be divided among the four of us. Five thousand pounds was enough for each. Diana and Mary gave up their jobs, and we met for a happy reunion.

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His arm touched my shoulder, my neck, my waist. He took me in his arms.

Is it Jane? This is her shape, her size . . .

She is all here—her heart, too. God bless you, sir.



The other night sitting by my open window, I was overcome by my longing for you. I cried out loud, "Jane! Jane! Jane!"



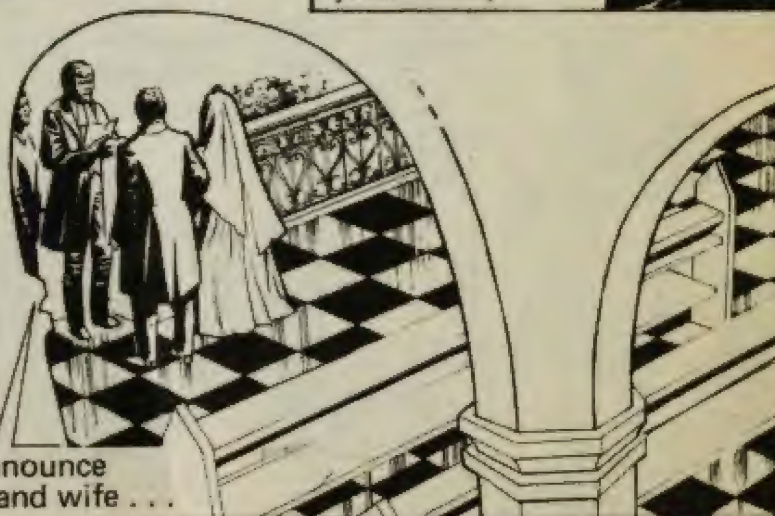
And a voice answered—*your voice*—"Wait for me! I am coming!"

And I came, sir. I am here . . . and will never leave you!



Four days later we were married.

I now pronounce you man and wife . . .



Two years later, as he dictated a letter, he came and bent over me.

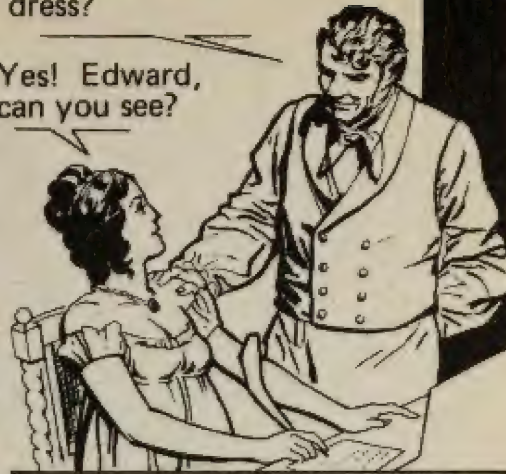
Jane, have you a shining ornament around your neck?

Yes, Edward.



And are you wearing a pale blue dress?

Yes! Edward, can you see?



He told me that he thought one eye was improving. We went to a London doctor at once. Soon Edward recovered the sight of that eye.

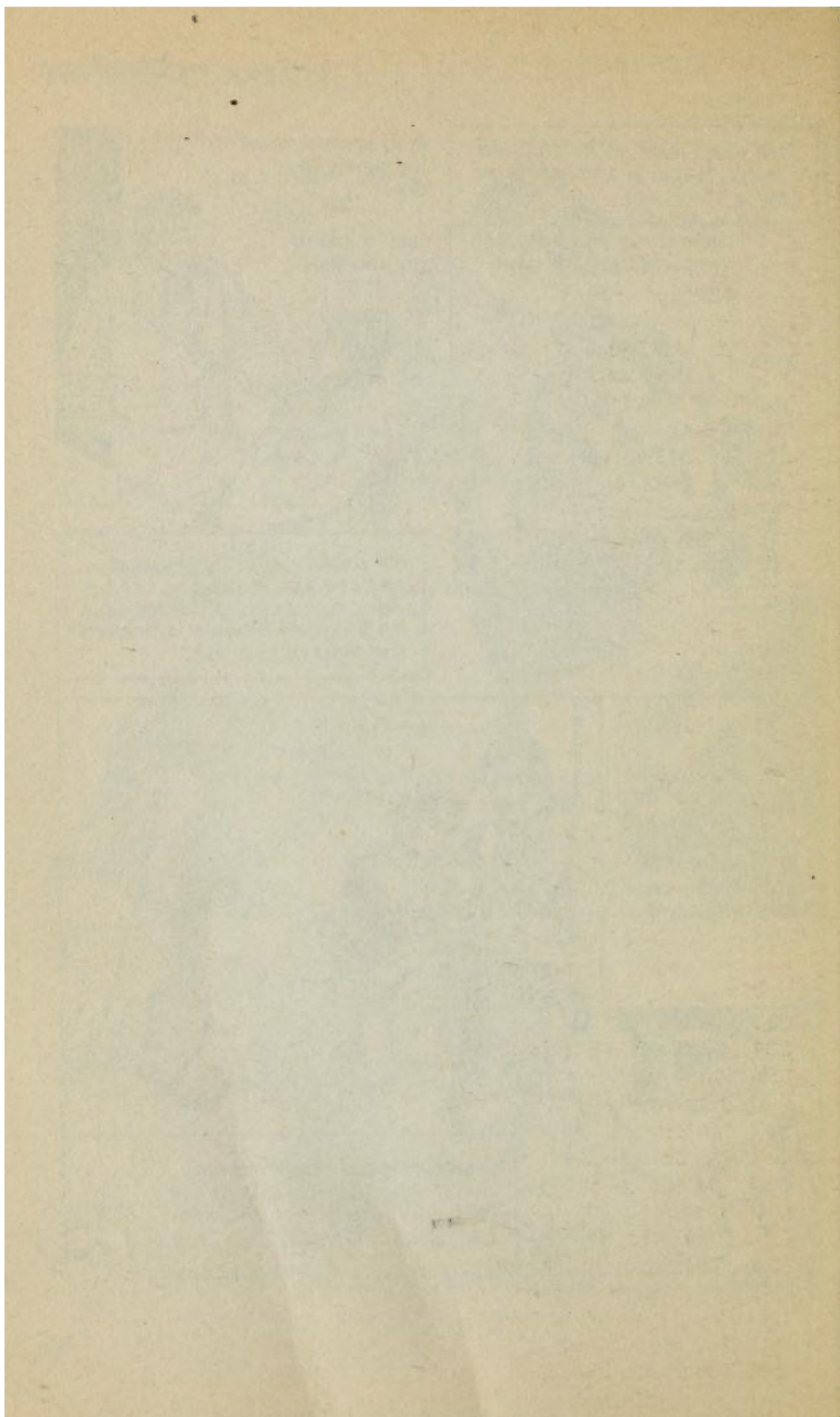
When his first child was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had eyes like his own as they once were, large and black.

Edward, meet your son!



I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live with what I love best on earth. I am greatly blessed.

THE
END



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